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MUSIC

By W. J. HENDERSON
Author and Music Critic

DEPARTMENT OF
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MODERN FRENCH MUSIC



FRANCE has never been so well provided with composers of talent as she is at the present time. Every year the far-famed Conservatoire turns out a number of young men whose musical knowledge is undeniable, and who are filled with buoyant hope of achieving distinction. The musical progress that has been effected in France during the last forty years is immense. This may be largely attributed to the initiative of Padeloup (1819-1887), the organizer and conductor of distinguished orchestral concerts that were given during the latter 60's; and to the zeal of his successors, Messrs. Lamoureux and Colonne, conductors of the Conservatoire concerts. It is through the efforts of these great leaders that instrumental music of the highest class came to be popularly appreciated in Paris.

Padeloup began his work long ago by familiarizing the Parisians with the symphonic works of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven. Mendelssohn and Schubert followed, and the valiant leader from time to time introduced the names of Berlioz and Wagner. During the first half of the nineteenth century, the influence of Rossini was predominant in French music. His reign, however, was usurped during the latter part of the century by Berlioz and Wagner. At first the appearance of the latter name on a program foreshadowed a disturbance, but the genius of Berlioz and Wagner are now uncontested, and the influence of these masters upon the modern French school has been both great and far reaching. Bizet revealed it in his "Carmen" as far back as 1875, and there was a suspicion of the same influence in some of Delibes' earlier ballets. Ernest Reyer's opera "Sigurd" bore witness to the same influence, while Alfred Bruneau avowed himself a staunch adherent of the Wagnerian system. César Franck's music likewise showed the influence of the master of Bayreuth, while Charpentier frankly employed Wagner methods in a modified manner. As for Massenet—the influence was so apparent in his case that his operas earned for him the title of "Mademoiselle Wagner."

But the influence has waned. The age of frank imitation has passed, and in the present day we find composers working, not under the spell of a single master, but in harmony with the best traditions of French music, and determining their own independent forms of expression.

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Masters of French Music

By W. J. HENDERSON, *Author and Music Critic*

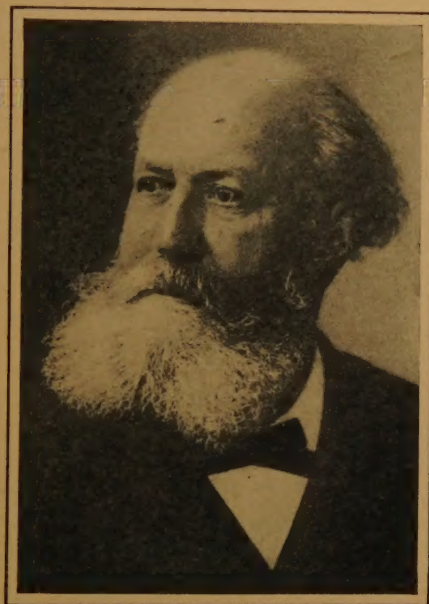


MENTOR
GRAVURES

GIACOMO MEYERBEER

CÉSAR FRANCK

LÉO DELIBES



CHARLES GOUNOD*



MENTOR
GRAVURES

CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS

GEORGES BIZET

CLAUDE DEBUSSY



When considering the masters of French music it becomes important to keep in mind the fact that France has always been foremost in dramatic art. Her musicians have given much to the development of the lyric drama, and her literature, rich as it is in fiction and *belles lettres*, has felt throughout its constitution the influence of the dramatists Racine (rah-seen) and Molière (Mol-yare')†. Therefore when we study the masters of French music we have to make a distinction between those that are primarily opera writers and those whose dramatic creations are second to their compositions in other fields.

Modern French music may be regarded as beginning with the ballets and operas of Jean Baptiste Lully (1633-1687), who cooperated largely with Molière. These two masters determined the form and style of the French classic opera, in which they were followed and surpassed by Jean Phillippe Rameau (rah-mo) (1683-1764). Rameau was a more scholarly musician than Lully and a sincerer artist. His operas had a profound influence on the whole development of the French musical drama and chiefly

*A full account of the life and work of Charles Gounod, together with a full-page gravure portrait, will be found in Mentor No. 47, "Makers of Modern Opera."

†Racine, a celebrated tragic poet, was born in 1639 and died in Paris at the age of sixty. He was an associate of Jean Baptiste Poquelin, whose stage name was Molière. Molière, the most distinguished French writer of comedies, lived during the years 1622-1673.

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on the works written for the Parisian stage by Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714-1787).

The lighter and more popular kinds of Italian opera had become fashionable in Paris, and Gluck's ambition was to supplant them with a pure and classic type, lofty in conception and noble in the chaste simplicity of its music. This he accomplished with his operas "Orphée (ore-fay) et (aye) Euridice" (aye-u-ree'-dee-che) (1762), "Alceste" (1767), "Iphigénie (if-ee-zhayn-ee) en Aulide" (1774), "Iphigénie en Tauride" (1781). These works were received by the French as perfect expositions of all that was finest in their lyric art and, although written by a Viennese, they have always been accepted as thoroughly French. Gluck restored to the opera of France the art given to it by Rameau, an art which, in the hands of inferior writers, had substituted bombast for noble tragic utterance, and, misled by the glitter of the sparkling Italian style of the time, had covered itself with cheap ornament.

Immediate successors of Gluck and emulators of his classic manner were Étienne Méhul (may-ul) (1763-1817), Luigi Cherubini (loo-ee-gee kay-ru-bee'-nee) (1760-1842) and Gasparo Spontini (1774-1851). Beethoven admired Cherubini, who, though Italian, passed most of his life in Paris. Méhul's "Joseph" was highly esteemed in its day, and of Spontini's works "Ferdinand Cortez" (1809) lived to have a production at the

Metropolitan Opera House, New York, in 1888. All of these operas would seem to us now to be dry, pompous and deficient in real human feeling, but their musical style was dignified and free from all vulgar methods of gaining the applause of the unthinking. They at least preserved the simplicity of melody and harmony found in Gluck's creations, and they strove to imitate his chaste manner. They handed down to modern French opera the clear and fluent melody and genuine opulence of expressive means which it has found how to use with a more human eloquence than they possessed.

Meyerbeer

Meanwhile the opera of France entered upon a new period and developed novel characteristics under the spell of a Berlin

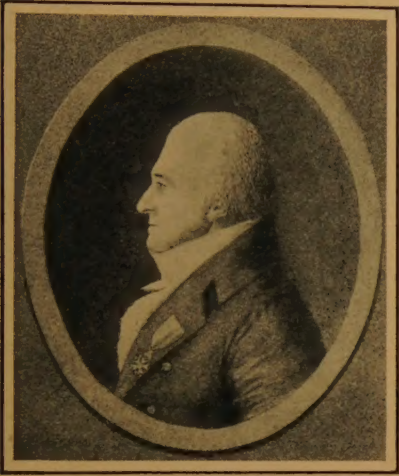


CHRISTOPH WILLIBALD GLUCK
From a painting by J. S. Duplessis



JEAN BAPTISTE LULLY

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ANDRE ERNEST MODESTE GRÉTRY

Painted in 1808 when the composer was 67 years old

master. This was Jakob, generally called by the Italian form of his name Giacomo (jah-ko-mo), Meyerbeer (1791-1864). His work seems to have been faintly foreshadowed by that of Daniel François Auber (fron-swah o-bare) (1782-1871) and Jacques François Halévy (ah-lay-vee) (1799-1862). The former's "La Muette de Portici" ("The Dumb Girl of Portici") and the latter's "La Juive" ("The Jewess") still hold the stage. The dumb girl in Auber's opera has to be performed by a pantomimist or acting dancer. Anna Pavlova, the famous dancer, has interpreted the part in the United States.

Both Auber's and Halévy's operas just mentioned have political plots taken from modern history. The employment of such

material marks one of the chief distinctions between the modern and the classic opera, for the latter leaned chiefly on mythology and the ancient Greek drama, or early history. Meyerbeer employed themes drawn from modern history, some of them rather more romantic than historical, and sought every opportunity to use as an attractive feature of his works the splendors of courts and pageants. His chief creations, all introduced in Paris, are "Robert le Diable" (roe-bare luh dyah'bl) (1831), "The Huguenots" (1835), "The Prophet" (1849), "Dinorah" (1859) and "L'Africaine" (1865). The first has fallen into disuse, but the others are still heard. "Dinorah" was recently revived by the Chicago Opera Company with Amelita Galli-Curci (coor-chee) in the title rôle, and "The Prophet" has been restored to the repertory of the Metropolitan Opera House with Mr. Caruso as the hero.

Meyerbeer has not been accepted by the critical opinion of the world as a genius, but as an extraordinarily clever man who knew how to make the most popular use of moderate powers. His ingenuity in planning his operas so that moods and pictures presented themselves in a pleasing succession of contrasts was remarkable. A dark scene with two or three gloomy characters and melancholy music is followed by a bright stage filled with richly clad people, the mood one of gaiety or passionate



JEAN PHILIPPE RAMEAU

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energy and the music brilliant. Processions, ballets and other spectacular features are employed to support situations dramatically weak, and curious instrumental devices are heard in the orchestra. Indeed, Sir Hubert Parry, writing of Meyerbeer, said: "When he has no idea at all he distracts your attention from that fact by a cadenza for the clarinet." Almost every recent opera in which pomp and circumstance figure shows the influence of Meyerbeer. Even Verdi's "Aida" (ah-ee-da) displays to us the Meyerbeerian succession of crowds and splendor and ballet followed by moonlight, the presence of two or three persons and much dark passion.



LUIGI CHERUBINI

From a painting by Ingres (ahngrr)

Gounod and Bizet

French composers immediately after Meyerbeer could not, of course, escape his influence, but they endeavored to preserve the dramatic sincerity of the older school. One of the famous masters whose operas present to us these features was Charles François Gounod (goo-noe) (1818-1893). It is unnecessary to give a catalog of his operas, though it is as an opera writer that the world knows him. His two oratorios "The Redemption" and "Mors et Vita" are rarely given, and they cannot claim rank with his theatrical compositions. His "Faust" (1859) is one of the most popular of all operas. His "Romeo and Juliet" (1867) is restored to vitality whenever there is a tenor capable of expressing the elegant sentiment and romantic character of the music allotted to the hero.



GASPARO SPONTINI



FRANÇOIS ADRIEN BOIELDIEU

Reproduction from a lithograph portrait after a painting by Riesener

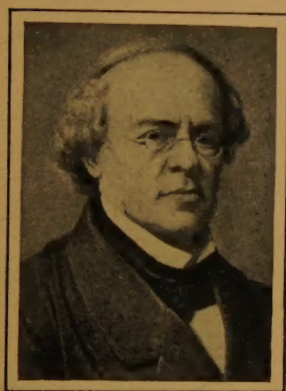
When "Faust" was produced, it made no deep impression. Indeed, the Soldiers' Chorus struck the audience as its best number. But slowly the flowing melodies of its rich score won their way into public affection, and, in a few years after its first performance in Paris, it was heard in every musical center in Europe. It was first given in the United States at the Academy of Music, New York, in 1863. From that time to this it has been the one work that draws to an opera house people that never go to hear any other opera. The

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zenith of its glory, however, was in the nineties when Emma Eames or Lillian Nordica, American sopranos, or Nellie Melba, Australian, with the famous Polish brothers de Reszke, Jean, tenor and Edouard, bass, sang in it at the Metropolitan.

"Carmen" rivals "Faust" in popularity, while it excels the older work in dramatic force. The composer's full name was Alexandre César Léopold Bizet (bee-zay), but he was called Georges. "Les Pecheurs des Perles" ("The Pearl Fishers") has been produced at the Metropolitan Opera House, but, despite the presence of Mr. Caruso in the cast, it made no lasting impression. "Carmen," however, has been a favorite for many years. Its tragic story of the young soldier that deserted

his service to follow the wayward gipsy to her mountain fastnesses, and his desperation when she turned from him to a new attraction in the person of a famous bullfighter, makes very suitable material for operatic music. The charm of the melodies and their eloquent expressiveness are known to all opera-goers, but not every one notes the great artistic insight of the composer in allotting to Carmen herself all the music of a strictly gipsy or Oriental character, while that given to the other personages of the drama is plain French opera music.

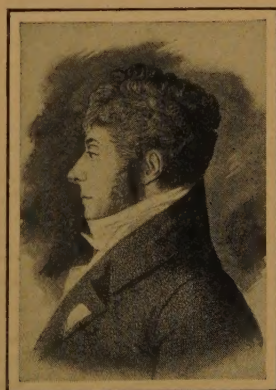


JACQUES FRANÇOIS HALÉVY

By this device he has most brilliantly thrown into contrast with all others the personality of Carmen. The rôle has been favored by many famous singers, including Emma Calvé, who sang it as many as thirteen times in one season at the Metropolitan, Mary Garden, Olive Fremstad and Geraldine Farrar. The part of Don José, the unfortunate lover, is barely second to Carmen in importance, and, in the last act, is superior to it. Hence it is liked by distinguished tenors. Jean de Reszke and Enrico Caruso are among those that have sung it at the Metropolitan, while Lucien Muratore has been heard in the part with the Chicago Opera Company.

Massenet

Perhaps no other French opera after "Carmen" and "Faust" is known to so many music lovers as "Manon," composed by Jules Massenet (mass-enay) (1842-1912). "Thaïs" (tah-ees) by the same composer has had some vogue in recent seasons, owing chiefly to the striking impersonations of the heroine by Mary Garden and Athanael the monk by Maurice Renaud. But the story written by the Abbé Prevost of the provincial French girl who so dearly loved admiration and luxury that she wrecked



ÉTIENNE NICOLAS MÉHUL

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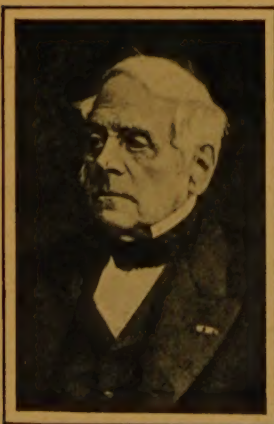
her life as well as that of the youthful Chevalier des Grieux (day gree-eu), her lover, is one that makes an irresistible appeal to the numerous army of devotees of romance.

Massenet fitted this story with music not of profound emotional depth, but possessing just that nicely balanced combination of sentiment, fancy and popularity of style that enchains the attention of the majority of opera-goers. Doubtless thousands of people that have never heard "Thaïs" are acquainted with the "Meditation," that is a violin solo played between two of the acts. As in "Manon," the score of this work is richly melodious, and there are some passages that attain a high level of dramatic eloquence. Many people find the work objectionable because it shows a monk become the victim of an earthly passion, while the object of it, originally quite unworthy, dies a saint.

"Le Cid," "Sappho," "Griselidis," "Herodiade," "Werther," and "Le Jongleur (zhohng-lehr) de Notre Dame" have also been given in the United States, but only the last-named made any serious impression. As originally designed, this opera contained no women, but the rôle of Jean the juggler has been interpreted with great art on the American stage by Mary Garden. The work is one of real charm, much of which is due to its story of the poor little wandering juggler who could find no way to express his gratitude to the Virgin but to perform his feats before her altar. Much of the music possesses Massenet's remarkable facility in graceful treatment of moods.



LOUIS JOSEPH HÉROLD (1791-1833)
Composer of "Zampa." A portrait drawn from life, on stone, by his friend L. Dupré



DANIEL FRANÇOIS AUBER

Charpentier and Debussy

Gustave Charpentier (shar-pane-tee-ay) (born 1860), is perhaps not so widely known as his merits deserve. His "Louise," produced in 1898 at Lille, is one of the most original of modern French operas. It deals with the history of a girl of the working class in Paris who loves a painter. The scenes deal entirely with the common life of the French capital, the humble home of the laborer, the sewing-room of a large dressmaking establishment, the streets of Paris in the early morning with all the curious dwellers in the hidden world of shadows, the festival of the crowning of the Muse on the hill of Montmartre, and similar episodes.

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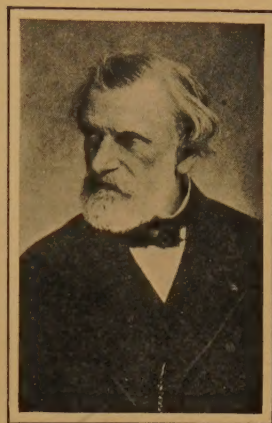
The music is of original character. The best known air is "Depuis (duh-pwee) le Jour" (zhoor) ("Since the Day") frequently sung in concert, but the reproduction of the street cries of Paris at the hour of the city's awakening is the most striking musical effect in the whole drama. The choral scene of the crowning of the Muse is effective, but less unusual in style. The successful treatment of the personalities of the actors in the play is by no means the least important of the composer's achievements. Charpentier cherished a lively affec-

tion for these people and wrote a sequel to "Louise" called "Julien" after the hero. In this he showed the descent of the young painter from high idealism to vulgarity. The opera has never been popular. It is a very imaginative work, and makes rather heavy demands upon the intellectual concentration of the hearer.

Far different in style and structure from all other French operas is the one lyric drama of Claude Achille Debussy (1862-1918) entitled "Pelléas et Mélisande." The libretto is adapted from a tragic drama by Maurice Maeterlinck, dealing with the ancient story of a young wife, an elderly husband and a youthful adorer. In this opera there is a splendidly successful union of literary and musical styles. Maeterlinck's drama is full of mysticism and symbolism, and Debussy's music is a perfect tonal embodiment of its strange brooding, emotional character. There is no melody of the familiar kind, but a species of continuous, fluid, transparent musical dialogue. Here again we have an opera that makes its appeal only to persons willing to follow dramatist and composer into their strange realm.

Berlioz and Saint-Saëns

Turning now from the field of opera we may dismiss all the composers mentioned thus far except Debussy as having no special importance in other departments of music. To him we shall revert



AMBROISE THOMAS (1811-1896)
Composer of "Mignon" and "Hamlet"



CÉSAR FRANCK MONUMENT, PARIS



CÉSAR FRANCK*

* At his beloved instrument in the Church of Sainte-Clotilde, Paris. From a painting by J. Rongier.

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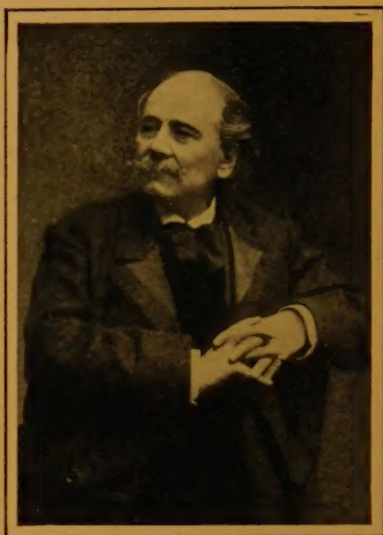
presently. The first of the great modern masters of French music that was not designed for the stage was Hector Berlioz (bare-lee-oze) (1803-1869).

The works by which he is known best to American music lovers are his romantic symphonies "Harold in Italy" (founded on Byron's poem "Childe Harold"), "Romeo and Juliet" and "Symphonie Fantastique." His dramatic oratorio, "The Damnation of Faust," has been given in New York both in its original form and as an opera. His "Requiem Mass," an imposing work, is also known. Berlioz was a man of fervid imagination and restless spirit, who found in music an outlet for his temperament. He rarely wrote music that was not of the representative type, that is, music illustrating a story or a poetic idea outside of itself. Although he never displayed a large inventive power in his melodies, he, nevertheless, possessed a distinct style of his own, and, especially in the treatment of the orchestra, was a leader in the modern trend of music.

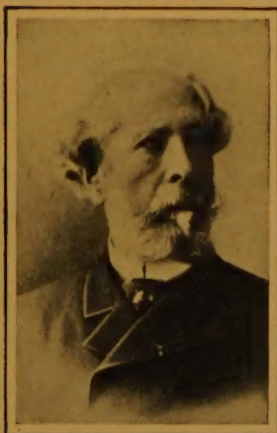
After Berlioz, the most influential of French masters not prominently identified with opera were César Franck (1822-1890) and Camille Saint-Saëns (sahng-sah-en) (born 1835). Franck was born at Liège, Belgium, but, while yet a student, went to Paris and remained there till his death. His most important works are the oratorios, "The Beatitudes" and "The Redemption," a symphony, and certain chamber music creations. His influence on numerous French musicians was great. He was a composer of profound seriousness of purpose, lofty ideals and imaginative gift. His

melodic themes are always filled with both grace and dignity, and there is no other composer of French music who more generously gratifies cultivated taste.

Saint-Saëns has been active in all departments of his art. His opera "Samson and Delilah" has recovered its popularity in America since Enrico Caruso became the impersonator of the strong man of Israel. But he is much more often brought to the attention of music lovers by his instrumental works and his songs. His symphonies, piano, violin and violoncello concertos are all often performed, as are also his fluent and fanciful symphonic poems, "The Youth of Hercules," "Le Rouet d'Omphale" (The Spinning Wheel of Omphale), and others. The music of this remarkable man is distinguished by



JULES MASSENET



EDOUARD LALO (1823-1892)



GOUNOD IN HIS LIBRARY

great vivacity of spirit as well as by facility of melody. All of his compositions are rich in vigor and freshness. He writes always as if he had just begun to compose after a long rest. For this reason, before all others, his music at once catches and holds the interest of the auditor. Besides being a famous composer, Saint-Saëns is also an essayist and a poet of genuine distinction.

Delibes and d'Indy

Clement Philibert Léo Delibes (duh-leeb) (1836-1891) must be mentioned because his captivating ballet music is so justly admired. "Lakmé," an opera on a story of India, has held the stage both here and abroad, but, without doubt, Delibes has won more fame through his ballets, "Coppelia" (1870) and "Sylvia" (1876). These delightful works have often been performed in this country and memories

of the charming art of Anna Pavlova are associated with them.

Vincent d'Indy (dahn-dee) (born 1851) is one of the most distinguished of contemporaneous French composers, though his art is not so generally known as that of some of the others mentioned in this article. He has written symphonic works, tone poems and chamber music, all marked by fine dignity of style, logical development and poetic conception. His manner is somewhat severe at times and this militates against his popularity. He has also earned recognition as an author, and his book on Beethoven is one of the most just and, at the same time, affectionate that has been published.

Augusta Holmès and Cecile Chaminade

France has produced two well known women composers, Augusta Holmès (born of Irish parents in 1847) and Cécile Chaminade (sham-i-nad) (born 1861). Mme. Holmès (olm) has composed an opera, "La Montagne Noir," symphonies, symphonic poems, and many songs. In this



MONUMENT TO BERLIOZ
Erected in his birthplace, Côte St.
André, near Grenoble, France

MASTERS OF FRENCH MUSIC

country she is not so well known as Mme. Chaminade, whose graceful pianó pieces are familiar and whose songs are much sung, though her orchestral compositions have not figured in the programs of the important organizations.

Bruneau and Dukas

Alfred Bruneau (broo-noe) (born 1857) at one time was believed to be the foremost dramatic master in France, by reason of the brilliant success of his "L'Attaque du Moulin" at the Opera Comique in 1893. The style showed the influence of Wagner as well as the devotion of the composer to his own ideals, which permitted scant consideration for the wishes of petted opera singers, and it called forth much discussion and much laudation. But in recent years little has been heard of Bruneau's operas in Paris and they never made their way further than England, as did the works of the com-

posers already mentioned in this article. Of the later

French composers that have been recognized as of more than local importance, Paul Dukas (doo-ka) must be mentioned. His opera "Ariane et Barbe Bleu," a poetic rendering of the ancient tale of Blue Beard, was produced at the Metropolitan Opera House, and his orchestral piece of humor, "The Sorcerer's Apprentice," is played by all the leading orchestras.

It is not possible to catalog the entire list of French musicians that have contributed to the delight of American music lovers. Maurice Ravel, for one, is widely known through his scintillating piano pieces, in which all the modern achievements in harmony and color are utilized with skill. Ernest Chausson (shos-sohng) is perhaps best known by his "Poème" for violin and Guillaume (gee-yome) Lekeu by his chamber music. These writers follow the standard of Debussy, whose originality of style in melody and harmony is displayed in his songs, some of them extraordinarily beautiful, and in his piano music. His orchestral poems, "The Afternoon of a Faun," "The Sea," and others, have been a striking influence in the musical art of our time. The novelty consists in making melodies with the notes of scales previously unused by modern European composers, and supporting them with the harmonies derived from the same scales.

Character of French Music

Among other writers are Henri Duparc, who figures often on the programs of song recitals, and Gabriel Pierné, whose charming cantata, "The Children's Crusade," is occasionally heard. No violinist's equipment is complete without Edouard Lalo's "Symphonie Espagnole." Henri Février's "Monna Vanna" opened the Chicago opera season in 1918, and his "Gismonda" was originally produced

*A full account of the life and works of Berlioz, together with a full-page gravure portrait will be found in Mentor No. 125, "The Orchestra."



HECTOR BERLIOZ*

From a photograph considered the best likeness of the composer in his later years



CHARLES M. WIDOR

A modern French composer for voice, strings and organ



VINCENT D'INDY

MASTERS OF FRENCH MUSIC

in Chicago under his direction on January 14, 1919. Two operas by Xavier Leroux, "Le Chemineau" (shem-ee-noe) and "La Reine (rain) Fiammette," have recently been performed by the opera organizations of New York and Chicago.

All nations impart something of their own character to their music. No matter how varied the expression of individuality, there is always the unity of a people in the utterance of its singers. In France this rule is exemplified very strikingly, for the diversity of styles is perhaps greater than we can find in any other country. From Gounod to Debussy is a far flight, while the concentrated introspection of such a master as César Franck is the direct opposite to the sensuous theatricalism of Massenet.

But no matter whose pages you scan or to whose lyric outpouring you listen, you find always that the entire art rests firmly upon a solid foundation of culture. From the formative medieval period when the University of Paris was called by Pope Julian the "rose of Christendom," when all students, from the humblest to Dante himself, went to sit at the feet of the scholars of France, the music of the country has been the creation of gentlemen and scholars. It is rich in imagination, in largeness of conception, in intensity of expression, but it is never rude, never barbarian, never lacking in that elegance and courtly grace that marks the citizen of the world of letters. From the Middle Ages France has been the home of polite literature and drama. Her music shares with these other arts the perfection of polish which is one of their principal attractions to the cultivated mind.



CÉCILE CHAMINADE



GUSTAVE CHARPENTIER

In recent years, furthermore, the strongly marked character of French music has been intensified by the labors of her musical scholars in fields of original research. Jean Beck and Pierre Aubry have revolutionized her knowledge by revealing to her the intensely national creations of her earliest singers, the Troubadours. The Schola Cantorum, conducted with authority by Vincent d'Indy, is an organization that has struck at the roots of musical education and brought into the world of the student the very essence of the life of modern music at its original source, Italy. In composition the best French masters of the most recent years have assuredly equalled and probably surpassed those of other countries, but in the realm of scholarship France reigns supreme.

SUPPLEMENTARY READING

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By Mary Hargrave

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* * Information concerning the above books may be had on application to the Editor of The Mentor.

THE OPEN LETTER

Some of the best French music was composed by men that were not native Frenchmen, but that, in an art sense, "found themselves" in France, and gave to their adopted country the full fruits of their musical genius. Such was Gluck, music master in France in the eighteenth century, and Meyerbeer, dominant figure in the Paris Opera during the first half of the nineteenth century. Such, too, was Offenbach, for years a master of opera bouffe, whose works were the "rage" in France, Austria, England and America during the 60's, 70's and early 80's. Though, by no means, qualified to fill a niche in the Hall of French Music Immortals, Offenbach made a wider and more ingratiating appeal to the music-loving public than some of the masters. During his lifetime he held a place of eminence in the field of light opera, which Lecocq alone—the composer of "La Fille de Mme. Angot," "Giroflé-Girofla" and "The Little Duke"—could contest with him. And, after death, his spirit rose successfully to the greater sphere of Grand Opera in the production of his crowning work, "The Tales of Hoffmann."

★ ★ ★

Jacques Offenbach was born near Cologne in 1819, and came to Paris in 1833. He played the violoncello in the orchestra of the Opéra Comique, in which position he made no mark whatever. He first appeared as a composer of songs, and in 1853 he produced a little piece called "Pepito." In December 1855 he took over a theater and produced a succession of operettas that became immensely popular, and that finally opened up to him the doors of the Opéra Comique, and even of the exclusive Académie. Offenbach was a most active, energetic and prolific genius. He was ever planning and producing concert or opera pieces.

★ ★ ★

Ninety pieces of music produced in twenty-five years—think of it! Is it any cause for wonder that some of Offenbach's melodies are trivial and commonplace? He was a bold—some critics called him an irreverent—innovator. The rules of music seemed to him simply to be things to break, and he did so quite cheerfully if any object that he sought seemed to be served by it. Offenbach was cursed with a fatal facility. Everything came to him easily and too fast, and his nature was

such that he would not check the flow nor give himself time for maturing his musical ideas. And yet the generations that have heard and still love to hear the music of "The Grand Duchess," "La Belle Hélène," "Périchole," "The Princess of Trebizonde" and the other old favorites will tell you that the joy and sparkle, the smooth-flowing melodic phrases and the effective ensembles that distinguish Offenbach's music entitle him to a place, at least, in the gallery of the Minor Masters of French Music. Lecocq, with his gay, vivacious music, belongs there too.

★ ★ ★

In 1875 Offenbach visited America, but made no appreciable impression. He appeared in England several times as conductor of his operas. He died in 1880 in Paris; and of him it might be truly said, in Shakespeare's words, "Nothing so became him as his taking off," for, within a short time after his death, "The Tales of Hoffmann" was produced at the Opéra Comique with a great cast and was played no less than 101 nights in the year of its production. It was apparently destined for a world success, but a tragic incident cast a cloud over the fortunes of the opera when it was performed for the first time in Vienna at the Ring Theater, on December 8, 1881. That night the Opera House caught fire and 580 people were killed in the conflagration and panic. "The Tales of Hoffmann" was tried out in a few performances in New York in 1881, with little effect; and then, twenty-five years later, in 1906, it was produced at the Manhattan Opera House by Mr. Hammerstein, with a star cast, including Charles Dalmores, Maurice Renaud, and other distinguished artists, and it held a prominent place in the Manhattan repertory for two seasons.

★ ★ ★

Out of the ninety musical productions by Offenbach, most of them popular in their day, few except "The Tales of Hoffmann" may be known in another twenty years. I venture the prediction, however, that selections of his light-hearted, witty and oftentimes luscious, music will be played for a long time, and that future generations will find enjoyment in the sparkling measures, the tender songs, and the melting melodies that Offenbach gave to the world.

W.D. Moffat



GIACOMO MEYERBEER

BORN Jakob Liebmann Beer, the future composer of several important works in our opera repertory inherited from his mother rare intellectual and artistic gifts. His father was a Jewish banker of Berlin. A relative named Meyer bequeathed to Jakob, the eldest of three brothers, a legacy, in token of which he assumed his

benefactor's name, and became Jakob (afterwards Giacomo) Meyerbeer. Of his two brothers, one was a poet, the other an astronomer.

Meyerbeer was born in the year 1791. When he was scarcely able to poise himself on the piano stool he began to take lessons from the famous old music master, Clementi, who had long before retired, but, on hearing the boy play, had volunteered to teach him. At seven, the little Jakob appeared on the concert stage, rendering a concerto by a composer that a generation before had startled the musical public by his juvenile virtuosity—the incomparable Mozart. In two years the child was counted the peer of any pianist in Berlin. His parents saw to it that no part of his musical education was neglected. By his theory teacher, Bernard Weber, director of the Berlin Opera House, Meyerbeer was introduced to the Abbé Vogler, a theoretician for whom, it may be said, Mozart had a profound contempt. "He gives out that he will make a composer in three weeks and a singer in three months," he declared in one of his letters. Despite the incredulity of many musicians as to the authority of the Abbé's teachings, he had a number of pupils that became famous. Meyerbeer was one of them. In 1810 he went to Darmstadt to live in the old professor's house. One of his companions under the same roof was Carl Maria von Weber, who later was to be known as the composer of "Freischütz," "Oberon" and "Euryanthe." During two years spent as a member of Vogler's family, Meyerbeer, it is related, pursued his studies with the utmost ardor, sometimes refusing to leave his room for days at a time. It was required of him to write a composition on a given theme every day, and, besides, to be ever diligent as a student of the piano. Oratorios, operas and lighter pieces occupied him at this time. The failure of the "Two Caliphs" at Vienna overwhelmed him with despair as to his future. In Italy, where he journeyed in 1815, he heard a new and inspiring kind of music; and, straightway, he began to write operas in the national style. Soon these florid scores, which he was afterwards accustomed to call his "wild oats," rivaled those of Rossini in popularity.

In 1826 Meyerbeer was invited to witness in Paris the first rendering of his op-

era, "H Crociato," which he had composed two years before. For seven years thereafter his pen was idle, due in part to the death of his father, his marriage, and the loss of two children. During much of this time he lived in Paris, studying the taste of the French people and their dramatic and musical arts. A biographer relates that as a man "he did not shrink from the unremitting, insatiable industry that he had shown as a boy, and he buried himself in the literature of the French opera, from the days of Lully onwards."

A new Meyerbeer was revealed in "Robert le Diable," (Robert the Devil), the world-wide success of which was credited to its stage effects, its ingenious orchestration, its honeyed melodies and dramatic story. Compared with "Robert the Devil," "The Huguenots," produced five years later, had an indifferent reception. But it was not long before its hearers revised their opinion and acclaimed this operatic version of a romantic sixteenth-century tale the superior of its predecessor.

Visits to Berlin, Vienna and London occupied the composer for a dozen or more years previous to the production of "Le Prophète" at Paris in 1849. During this interval some of his operas gained added renown through the interpretation of the chief soprano rôles by the Swedish song-bird, Jenny Lind. In the composing, correcting, casting and rehearsing of his scores, no master ever expended his energies more prodigally than Meyerbeer. After the death of his friend and collaborator, Eugène Scribe, his vitality began to fail. He gave himself feverishly to the completion of the score of "The African," (L'Africaine), performance of which had long been postponed because of his demand that the music and singers meet his fastidious standards. It was a year after his death in Paris on the second of May, 1864, that "L'Africaine" reached production. The following summer this, the most emotional of his works, was acclaimed in London.

Fétis, one of Meyerbeer's staunchest champions, affirms that "whatever faults or failings have been laid to his charge by his opponents, one thing—his originality—has never been called in question. All that his works contain,—character, ideas, scenes, rhythm, instrumentation—all are his and his only."



CÉSAR FRANCK



FATHER" FRANCK, to give him the name bestowed by his pupils, is venerated in France as a regenerator of modern music through the revival of the profound harmonic riches of John Sebastian Bach.

As an educator, and as an organist of splendid attainments, he engages still further the admiration of his adopted countrymen.

Born a Belgian, in the historic city of Liège, César Franck claimed descent from a line of artists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, one of whom Henry III of France appointed painter at his Court. César, the growing youth, also had a taste for drawing, and for diversion turned to it often during his lifetime. His father was a banker, who, contrary to tradition, elected that his sons should not enter a counting-house, but should study music as a profession. Their home in Liège was frequently the meeting-place of artists and musicians.

After several years of schooling at the renowned Conservatory of Liège, the father forsook his native country and, with his two sons, took up his residence in Paris. In 1837, when César had attained his fifteenth year, he was accepted as a pupil at the *Conservatoire*. Cherubini was then director of the famous institution. One day, during a competition for piano pupils, the sixteen-year-old Belgian boy exceeded the staid rules of the sight-reading test by playing the composition put before him in another key than the one indicated, and this fluently and without an error. Cherubini, far from commending the lad for his daring ingenuity, was frankly indignant at the presumption. He decreed that the culprit must forego the first prize in favor of a contestant more reliable—if less original, but did finally so far relent as to contrive for the young genius a hitherto unheard-of award—"the Grand Prize of Honor."

In future tests the gifted boy repeatedly won distinction for his musical inventions, but not infrequently his professors were so confounded, even dismayed, by his technical audacities that they dumbly refused to give him recognition. Eventually his father removed him from the school and took him back to his native city.

To comply with his father's wishes, the budding composer and instrumentalist appeared at a number of piano recitals after the return to Belgium. In 1844 the family again made their home in Paris. The father's fortune having been spent, they were often pressed for funds. César and his brother gave music lessons. And under these uncertain circumstances—independent in love as in harmonic invention—César took a wife. It is related by Vincent d'Indy in his enthusiastic revelation of his master's life and works ("César Franck—a Study") that the marriage of the rising young composer to Mademoiselle "Des-

mousseaux (day-moos-so), an actress of well-known family, was celebrated in the Church of Our Lady of Lorette, where the groom was organist, two days before King Louis Philippe abdicated, in February, 1848. Paris was then in open insurrection. "To reach the church," says d'Indy, "the wedding-party had to climb a barricade, and the bride and bridegroom were willingly helped in this delicate operation by the insurgents who were massed behind this improvised fortification."

Though in the years that followed his marriage the Belgian master often found his earnings unequal to the demands of his family, he set aside daily, at no matter what cost, a short "time for thought." In these periods of seclusion he composed most of his principal works. Appointed in 1858 organist and choirmaster at Sainte-Clotilde, where he presided at the manuals of a remarkable instrument for over thirty years, and succeeding Benoist (bane-wah) as Professor of Organ at the Conservatory, César Franck held the esteem of his contemporaries chiefly as an organist and teacher. To his home in the Boulevard Saint-Michel (sahng mee-shell) came the embryo composers, Henri Duparc, Vincent d'Indy, Camille Benoit, Augusta Holmes, Ernest Chausson; and at his classes at the Conservatory he taught many others who afterwards wielded an influence upon modern French music. Often his pupils gathered secretly in the organ loft at Sainte-Clotilde to hear him flood the dim basilica with his wondrous improvisations. In such moments he conceived the divine melodies of his master-work, "The Beatitudes." Adored by his scholars and praised by such musical lights as Alexandre Guilmant, Chabrier, Lalo, Vidal, Pierné, Georges Marty, Paul Dukas and Eugen Ysaye, the *maestro* received during his life only tolerant recognition from the public and the French Government. He lived his sunny, trusting, helpful days to their close, "bent on beauty alone," superior to petty jealousies and intrigue. In his sixty-ninth year, referring to an unaccustomed ovation, he ingenuously remarked to his pupils, "You see, the public is beginning to understand me!" An accident was the indirect cause of his death in November, 1890. The monument raised fourteen years later in the square opposite the Church of Sainte-Clotilde is evidence of the altered attitude of the French people, who now proclaim César Franck the founder of a school of national music, and one of the truly great artists of his century.



LÉO DELIBES



IN a little village in the Department of the Sarthe, Clement Philibert Léo Delibes first saw the light, February 21, 1830. When he was still a small child, his mother, left a widow with meager resources, took him to live in Paris. There as a choir-boy his voice soon attracted the attention of the choir-masters at the

Church of the Madeleine. Like other precocious youths described in this series of monographs, his musical education began early. At the age of twelve he was admitted to the Conservatory, and forthwith began to win special awards for progress. As accompanist at the Lyric Theater and organist in a Paris church, Delibes secured pupils while he was himself a student at the national school under Adolphe Adam. When he finally left the Conservatory, it was with the intention of giving as much of his time as possible to composition.

For the next ten years he wrote trifling *opérettes*, a number of which came to production on the Paris stage. These served to give him skill in practice, and, though often discouraged by failure, Delibes' keen, vigorous temperament never permitted him to relax his efforts in the sphere in which he had determined to excel. While he was organist at the Church of St. John and St. Francis, he took the momentous step of joining the staff of the Paris opera as assistant director of the chorus. In this capacity he enlisted the friendship of Perrin, the stage director at that time. Perrin had so much faith in the talent of Delibes, who was then approaching his thirty-second year, that he commissioned him to write music for a ballet scene to be presented on the opera stage. "La Source," the score submitted, was first played in the fall of 1866, and because of its originality and distinction of style had the happy fortune to win praise from critics and artists as well as the public. This music revealed Delibes' true talent. He was commissioned by the opera authorities to write another *divertissement*. This also came to successful performance at the

national Opera House. "Le Roi l'a dit," an *opéra-comique*, received enthusiastic notices in both France and England. It was the exquisitely melodious "Coppelia," however, that definitely fixed the reputation of this composer. "Sylvia," or "The Nymph of Diana," charmed all Paris at its first performance in 1876, and earned for its author the ribbon of a chevalier of the Legion of Honor a year later.

Delibes was the first to introduce symphonic music into the ballet. As a composer he was invariably elegant, graceful and vivacious. In his special field he preceded Edouard Lalo, André Messager, and still younger musicians of France, whose muse, in the words of a poetic Frenchman, lent "wings to the Dance."

The wife of Léo Delibes was the daughter of a former actress at the *Comédie-Française*, the principal dramatic theater subsidized by the Government. For this theater's revival of "Le Roi s'amuse" he composed the incidental music. Over the heads of several rivals he was made professor of composition at the Conservatory in 1881. To this task he brought the scrupulous self-denial, devotion and conscientiousness that characterized him in all he did. A prize won by a pupil filled him with a satisfaction more intense than his pleasure in a personal success. Honors crowded upon him in his last years. At the height of his popularity, the composer of "Lakmé" and other captivating scores fell suddenly ill at Paris, and died in January, 1891. On a June day eight years later, two monuments were unveiled in his memory in the village where he was born, among the hills of the Province of Sarthe.



CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS

SAINT-SAËNS," remarks Romain Rolland, author of "Jean-Christophe," "has had the rare honor of becoming a classic while he lives." Though the composer's birthday occurred in the year 1835, the light of his genius still burns with clear and steady flame. In the opinion of an English critic, "There probably does not

exist a living composer who is gifted with a musical organization so complete as that of Camille Saint-Saëns. Never at a loss for an idea, invariably correct and often imaginative, going from a piano concerto to an opera, and from a cantata to a symphonic poem with disconcerting ease, finding time to distinguish himself as organist and pianist, and to wield the pen of critic, author and poet, the astonishing capabilities of this wonderfully gifted musician may be put down as absolutely unique."

When he was three years of age, a grand-aunt gave Saint-Saëns his first lessons on the piano. His eager fingers were then so weak that he used to press down the fingers of the right hand with those of the left in order to produce a clear tone. When he was seven he was sufficiently advanced to study with instructors of reputation. Saint-Saëns' father being dead, his guidance was entirely in the hands of his mother and doting grand-aunt. All their interests and hopes centered in the boy, whose musical progress was to become the sensation of France. At the age of ten he played a duet with his piano teacher, Stamaty, before a distinguished company that Madame Saint-Saëns had invited to her house, and charmed the guests by performing with facility and understanding some difficult works by Bach and Beethoven. His first public concert was played a year later in that hall of harmonious memories, the Pleyel Salon. Parisian critics unanimously proclaimed the prowess of "Little Camille." By some he was compared to the wonder-child, Mozart.

Even at this stage of his career, Saint-Saëns "had a sort of physical repulsion for outward success"—an attitude toward the plaudits of the public which, in his old age, he confirmed in writing to a journalist: "I take very little notice of either praise or censure, not because I have an exalted idea of my own merits (which would be foolish), but because, in doing my work, and fulfilling the function of my nature, as an apple-tree grows apples, I have no need to trouble myself with other people's views."

In a couplet that appears in his book of "Familiar Rhymes," the composer describes himself as a child

*"Slightly built and pale,
Yet full of simple confidence and joy."*

Unaffected by praise, serene of faith, ever industrious, Saint-Saëns, when twelve years old, was ready to enter the Conservatory at Paris, where he was a pupil of Benoist and Halévy. Almost imme-

diately he won prizes for his ability at the organ. Twice in the next few years he failed in competitions for the "prix (pronounced 'pree' and meaning 'prize') de Rome," but before he was seventeen he composed a symphony which is still adjudged a masterpiece. In 1867 his cantata, "Les Noces de Prométhée," secured him first place in a competition with a hundred other musicians. Hector Berlioz was one of the judges that with one voice gave the young composer the award. "How happy he will be!" Berlioz wrote to a friend on the day of the decision. "I ran to his house to announce the news, but my young friend had gone for a walk with his mother."

For twenty years Saint-Saëns was organist at the Church of the Madeleine in Paris. During this period, and for a long while afterwards, his reputation as pianist, organist and composer was yearly increased by protracted recital tours which he undertook in Europe and America. He had many ardent friends among the famous musicians of that time. Hans von Bülow declared, after conversing with him, "that nothing was unknown to him," and added that what made him appear still greater in his eyes "was the sincerity of his enthusiasm and his great modesty." He conceived a profound and lasting admiration for Franz Liszt, an admiration that was sincerely reciprocated. Saint-Saëns is quoted as saying that without Liszt he could not have written "Samson and Delilah." His masterpiece, "Symphony with organ," was dedicated "to the memory of Franz Liszt."

Rolland, in his "Musicians of Today," attributes to the mature Saint-Saëns, "a languid melancholy, which has its source in a rather bitter feeling of the futility of life; and this is accompanied by fits of weariness, followed by capricious moods and nervous gaiety, and a freakish liking for burlesque and mimicry. It is his eager, restless spirit that makes him rush about the world writing Breton rhapsodies, Persian songs, Arabian caprices, souvenirs of Italy, and Egyptian concertos."

All the honors that France can bestow upon her musical geniuses Saint-Saëns has received. A dozen years ago he was present at the unveiling of his own statue in Beziers, France. In 1915 he came to the United States to conduct one of his compositions at the Panama-Pacific Exposition. At the ripe age of eighty-three, the greatest living master of French music is still a notable figure in the artistic life of Paris, where his home is frequently the scene of illustrious gatherings.



GEORGES BIZET



KINDLY man much loved by his friends, and a composer of charm and undoubted genius was Alexandre Bizet—called “Georges” by his godfather and the world of his admirers. His outstanding qualities of industry and perseverance were apparently inherited from his father, an artisan who began the study of music when he was

twenty-five years of age. The elder Bizet became a singing-master and established himself at Bougival, near Paris, where the son was born, October 25, 1838.

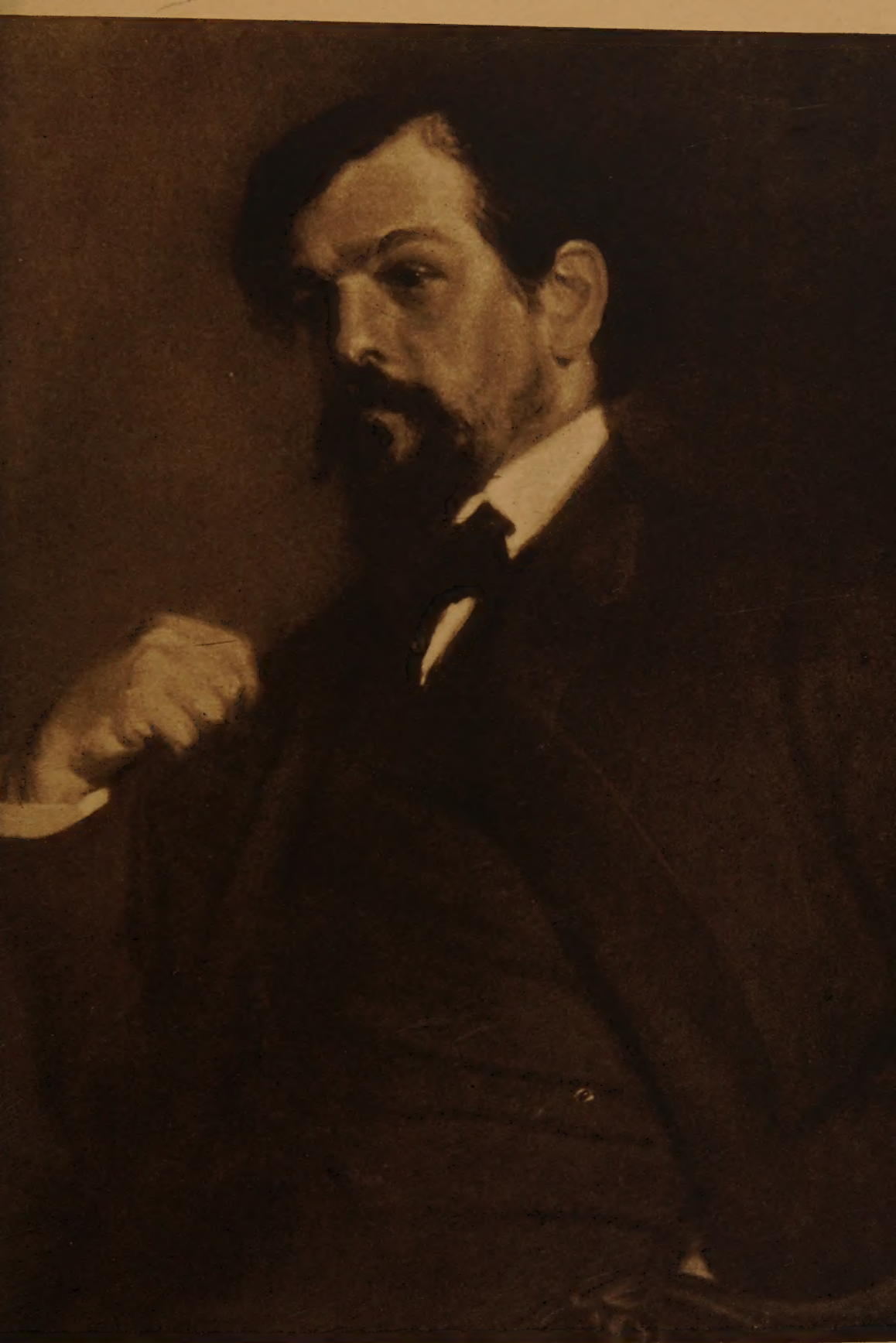
Bizet's mother, a sister of François Del-sarte, a French musician that attained a reputation as an exponent of dramatic expression, was a prize piano pupil at the Paris Conservatory. From his parents Georges learned the rudiments of harmony and the use of the pianoforte. But the boy loved most to read, and, whenever he could, he forsook the music room for a secluded place with his books. “They hid my books to keep me from abandoning music for literature,” he related to Louis Gallet (gal-lay) his librettist. Nevertheless, he acceded to the wishes of his father and mother and practiced diligently—so diligently and intelligently that as a child prodigy he was received as a pupil at the Conservatory. Here he had a number of noted masters—among them François Benoist for the organ and Halévy for composition. Before he was eleven years old he began to win prizes. Thereafter, prize-winning became a yearly diversion with him. As a pianist he developed marked ability, and astounded his teachers by the rapidity with which he read music at sight.

When Bizet was eighteen he was awarded the second “*prix de Rome*” for a score submitted in competition with seventy-seven other composers. Offenbach, in his capacity as manager of a popular Paris theater, offered prizes for the best musical setting to a libretto entitled “*Dr. Miracle*.” Georges Bizet and Alexandre Leococq won equal honors. Their scores had a public hearing, though, he it said, a quite unenthusiastic one. A few months later, Bizet, having won his first “*grand prix de Rome*,” set out for Italy. Installed as a protégé of his Government in the ancient city of youthful dreams, the future composer of “*Carmen*” began, in every way possible, to further his acquaintance with Italian music, literature and art. His correspondence with his family detailed the fullness of these Roman days. Under the terms of the competition he wrote an opera called “*Don Procopio*,” which he sent to the Academy of Fine Arts in Paris. The French composer, Ambroise Thomas, read this manuscript and commented on the “fresh, bold style” of the author.

His student days abroad being at an end, Bizet returned to Paris to find his adored mother mortally ill—the mother to whom he had written from Rome, “I wish to love you always with all my soul, and to be always, as today, the most loving of sons.” There followed a period of unending toil, sadness and disappointment. Inspiration was stifled by the pressure of daily needs. Bizet, the laurel-wreathed, became a music teacher; previous hours were wasted doing hack jobs for publishers. But patience and devotion had their reward when in September, 1863, his opera, “*The Pearl Fishers*,” was produced under auspicious circumstances. When, later, he was composing the score of “*The Fair Maid of Perth*,” he was obliged to earn his bread by giving piano lessons, arranging dance tunes, correcting proofs of others' compositions. In six months he completed the opera, despite exasperating hindrances, and witnessed a successful presentation. Sometimes he wrote scores that were delivered to the producer unsigned; often he tore up finished manuscripts that he felt were unworthy of the gift within him.

In June, 1869, he was married to the daughter of Jacques Halévy, his former instructor. His wife Genevieve reflected their unblemished contentment together when she said to Gounod, after her husband's death, that there was not one moment in their six years of married life that she would not gladly live over again. To a remarkable degree Bizet had the genius of making and holding friends. Among his intimates he numbered many musical and literary celebrities of that fruitful epoch. Saint-Saëns bitterly assailed the Parisian public that received with indifference a one-act opera by Bizet, produced in 1872 at the Opéra-Comique. With equal zest, Bizet challenged a stranger who disparaged Gounod's “*Queen of Sheba*.”

Bizet lived to be present at the first performance of “*Carmen*.” Its failure to please the Paris of that day overwhelmed him with melancholy. Already afflicted by acute heart trouble, he died three months after the initial production, when but thirty-six years of age. Bizet, “the most spontaneous of all French musicians,” was named by the philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, “the discoverer of new lands—the Southern lands of music.”



CLAUDE DEBUSSY



WITHIN the past year, Claude Debussy, "apostle of sobriety, restraint and discreet beauty," has been removed by death from a world "in which the dazzling thunder of 'Bertha' and such hellish vocalists made men's daily music." A man of unique vision, "the most original composer since Chopin," "the very exceptional, very

curious, quite solitary" Claude Debussy is profoundly lamented by the world of music. Yet it is doubted whether, passing away in his fifty-seventh year, he had any further message to convey. His last large work appeared in 1909. The first performance of his most important contribution, the score of "*Pelléas et Mélisande*," occurred seven years earlier. The date of its production is counted one of the few red-letter days in the calendar of the modern lyric stage. Above all, Debussy loved liberty—liberty of ideas, freedom from tradition. In the limpid accents and flowing rhythm of this music "without a flame," the composer of "*Pelléas and Mélisande*" manifested his revolt against excessive emphasis, thundered sentiment, outraged passion.

In March, 1918, the uneventful life of Claude Achille Debussy came to a close. Acquaintances describe his temperament as mild, ironic, indolent and good-humored. He had dreamy brown eyes in a head firmly set on strong shoulders, and a placid manner disturbed only by the nervous movements of sensitive, capable hands. His true self was rarely accessible to strangers; to his intimates he showed a genial, whimsical, loyal nature. Debussy's father would have made him a seafaring man. None of his family was musical, but, by his immature rendering of some piano music, he had the good fortune to interest a lady that had once been a pupil of Chopin. She so far exerted herself in his behalf that he was prepared to enter the Conservatory at Paris in 1873, when he was fifteen years old. His first composition, a song, was dated 1876. As a student of harmony he evinced a native obstinacy against complying with accepted laws, and, to the despair of his masters, constructed "musical rebuses" of his own, when set tasks in harmony. When the incorrigible pupil passed under the guidance of Ernest Guiraud, the latter, though sympathetic, urged the youth to hold to established rules of composition, at least until he should win the "*prix de Rome*." Debussy reluctantly acted upon the advice, and was rewarded by gaining the prize a few years afterwards with a graceful cantata, "*The Prodigal Son*." In the meantime, Debussy appeared occasionally at the organ classes of César Franck, against whose camp of followers he was later to oppose his own banner. He also made a

journey to Russia as pianist in the family of a Russian engineer. There he made his first acquaintance with Moussorgsky, also a composer of original methods, and fell under the spell of the gypsies that played and sang in the cabarets and gardens of Moscow, just as he was later fascinated by the odd rhythms of the Javanese orchestra at the Paris Exposition.

From Rome, where he arrived in 1884, Debussy duly forwarded each year a manuscript for the approval of the Institute at Paris. A symphonic suite called "*Spring*" was summarily rejected by a jury that comprised Gounod, Ambroise Thomas, Saint-Saëns, Massenet, Reyer and Delibes. The next year, when he had arrived at the age of twenty-seven, Debussy's setting to Rossetti's poem, "*The Blessed Damozel*," was accepted at the Institute, but he refused to permit a production of it unless at the same time he might present "*Spring*," to which he had evidently given his heart. As this demand was refused, he withdrew "*The Blessed Damozel*" from rehearsal.

It was in 1892 that the composer inscribed the subtle measures of "*The Afternoon of a Faun*." In the same year, walking late one summer day down the Boulevard des Italiens, in Paris, he entered a bookshop and chanced upon a copy of Maeterlinck's drama of the lovers, "*Pelléas and Mélisande*." That evening he began to read it, and was struck at once by the opportunities for musical interpretation. Shortly after, he journeyed with a friend to Ghent, Belgium, to arrange with Maeterlinck for the use of the text. For ten years he worked on the score—rather, says Laloy, his biographer, "he dreamed over it these ten years, interrupting his meditations to write, when he felt the moment had come to fix his thought. Slowly the work became a condensation of dreams, a net of mystery, a revelation of hidden sentiments, a long exploration into the shadows of his being." On the 30th of April, 1902, the finished score received a hearing at the Opéra-Comique, with Mary Garden in the title rôle and André Messager at the conductor's desk. The unqualified success of the opera silenced sceptics and enraptured the cult of the "Debussystes,"—a cult that gains new adherents at each production of the masterpiece in Europe and America.

Improving One's Mind

THIS is just a little story—with an after reflection.

Many summers ago I was spending my vacation with friends at a quiet lakeside place. It was late in the afternoon of a warm July day, and I was sitting in a shady spot, having a real good time with a book. Voices came down from the lawn where the tennis-courts were. Someone asked for me—and someone else answered: "Don't disturb that young man. He is down below somewhere reading. I saw him take a dusty old book from the library and set off by himself. He is *bent on improving his mind.*"

That settled me. The accusation of wanting to "improve my mind" was enough to bring me to time and make me realize my obligations to my fellow beings. I had a book that I had long wanted to read, and I was perfectly content, until that observation, "*bent on improving his mind*" disturbed me. I could never forget the charge, nor the tone of light irony in which it was uttered. It seemed to imply that a desire to read a profitable book set one apart from one's fellow beings in a way that was definite and final. Today the case is disposed of in one word: "highbrow"—an expression which, as far as I can make out, may be defined, in a majority of cases, as meaning "someone who hungers for something that I can't see at all."

This experience often comes back to me now in the course of planning The Mentor and in giving service to Mentor readers. There is hunger a-plenty for information here. The daily mail is full of it. What does it mean? Certainly not what my old-time friends might have called a "high-brow taste." It is some vital, fundamental desire that urges thousands of earnest people to seek information. The answer is made in the office of The Mentor many times a day. One afternoon last week I saw three stocky young sailors standing in the reception room, each with an open copy of The Mentor in his hand. They had just come off one of the big transports that bring our boys home from the other side, and they wore their knitted "watch caps," wool sweaters, blue blouses and pea-jackets. They were splendid specimens of the ordinary seamen, brown, sturdy and strong—"sea-goin'"—the best type of the fighting manhood that has done its bit "over there." When I came back a quarter-hour afterwards, the three were still standing and still reading. They finally went out with Mentors in their hands. The subjects that they chose were "The Cradle of Liberty," "France in War Time," "The Grand Canyon," "King Arthur," "The Virgin Islands," "Lafayette," "Chinese Art" and "Julius Cæsar." They said that they were coming back for some more Mentors—just as soon as they got their pay. When those boys come back they will get the Mentors they want whether they have their pay with them or not.

As I watched them go, the words came echoing down the years: "They are bent on improving their minds"—yes, my friends of long ago, that is just what these fine brown boys are bent on. I wish that you could be here when they come in again. I should like to have you meet these husky "highbrows."

W. D. M.

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